AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) An image processing method, comprising:

inputting pixel data of an image;

performing block selection processing on the pixel data to determine types of pixels within the image;

determining, based on the block selection processing, if a pixel is in an object area of the image; and

selectively performing black character determination processing on the pixel, wherein black character determination is performed in a case that ~~if~~ the pixel is determined to be in an object area of the image based on block selection processing.

2. (Currently Amended) A method according to Claim 1, wherein the inputting step comprises:

a pre-scanning step to input pixel data of a first resolution; and

a scanning step to input pixel data of a second resolution, the second resolution higher than the first resolution, wherein the block selection processing is performed on the pixel data of the first resolution, and

wherein the step of selectively performing black character determination processing ~~detecting~~ is performed on the pixel data of the second resolution.

3. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 2, wherein black character determination processing comprises one or more of detecting a thickness of

a character including the pixel, detecting chromaticity of the pixel, and detecting proximity of an edge to the pixel.

4. (Cancelled)

5. (Currently Amended) Processor-executable process steps stored on a processor-readable medium, the process steps comprising:

an inputting step to input pixel data of an image;

a performing step to perform block selection processing on the pixel data to determine types of pixels within the image;

a determining step to determine, based on the block selection processing, if a pixel is in an object area of the image; and

a step of selectively performing ~~detecting step to selectively perform~~ black character determination processing on the pixel in a case that ~~if~~ the pixel is determined to be in an object area of the image based on block selection processing.

6. (Original) Processor-executable process steps according to Claim 5, wherein the step of inputting comprises:

a pre-scanning step to input pixel data of a first resolution; and

a scanning step to input pixel data of a second resolution, the second resolution higher than the first resolution,

wherein the block selection processing is performed on the pixel data of the first resolution, and

wherein the step of selectively performing black character determination

processing ~~detecting~~ is performed on the pixel data of the second resolution higher than the first resolution.

7. (Previously Presented) Processor-executable process steps according to Claim 6, wherein the step of performing black character determination further comprises one or more of a detecting step to detect a thickness of a character including the pixel, a detecting step to detect chromaticity of the pixel, and a detecting step to detect proximity of an edge to the pixel.

8. (Cancelled)

9. (Currently Amended) An image processing apparatus, comprising:

means for inputting pixel data of an image;

means for performing block selection processing on the pixel data to determine types of pixels within the image;

means for determining, based on the block selection processing, if a pixel is in an object area of the image; and

means for selectively performing black character determination processing on the pixel in a case that ~~if~~ the pixel is determined to be in an object area of the image based on block selection processing.

10. (Currently Amended) An apparatus according to Claim 9, wherein the means for inputting comprises:

means for pre-scanning input pixel data of a first resolution; and

means for scanning pixel data of a second resolution, the second resolution higher than the first resolution,

wherein the block selection processing is performed on the pixel data of the first resolution, and

wherein the means for selectively performing black character determination processing processes ~~detecting is performed on~~ the pixel data of the second resolution higher than the first resolution.

11. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to Claim 10, wherein the means for performing black character determination processing further comprises one or more of a means for detecting a thickness of a character including the pixel, a means for detecting chromaticity of the pixel, and a means for detecting proximity of an edge to the pixel.

12. (Cancelled)

13. (New) A method according to Claim 1, wherein the step of selectively performing black character determination processing is not performed in a case that the pixel is determined to be outside an object area of the image based on block selection processing.

14. (New) Process-executable process steps according to Claim 5,

wherein the step of selectively performing black character determination processing is not performed in a case that the pixel is determined to be outside an object area of the image based on block selection processing.

15. (New) An image processing apparatus according to Claim 9, wherein the means for performing black character determination processing does not process the pixel in a case that the pixel is determined to be outside an object area of the image based on block selection processing.